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Melksham Urban District Council

THE
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
Medical Officer of Health
AND THE
Sanitary Inspector
for the Year 1951



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To the Chairman and Members of the

MELKSHAM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Mr. Chairman, Miss Knee, and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my Annual Report for the year 1951, based on Ministry of Health Circular 42/51.

The District has remained free from serious epidemics throughout the year and the customary standard of good health which this district enjoys has been maintained.

The work of the Public Health Department in carrying out its varied functions in the field of Preventive Medicine is not easily measured and a large amount of routine work has to be undertaken to maintain existing standards. Considerable knowledge has still to be gained concerning the prevention, spread and control of certain infectious diseases such as Poliomyelitis and the development of effective protective agents against them is eagerly awaited. Everything possible needs to be done towards educating the public to an even higher standard of preventive hygiene and in the early recognition of dangerous diseases such as cancer and tuberculosis. This would help to eliminate much needless sickness and suffering, and reduce the growing expense of hospitals, sickness benefits, etc., which would in turn increase the national output and benefit the community generally.

It is hoped that the true value of Preventive Medicine in minimising sickness will be increasingly appreciated and that research and the carrying out of the many contributory factors in this vital field will not be hampered by lack of public interest and adequate funds.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Hill for his help and co-operation during the year, and Mrs. Hannaford and Mr. Mills for clerical assistance so ably and so willingly given.

Yours faithfully,

R. BRUCE KILLOH,

Medical Officer of Health.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS OF THE AUTHORITY

Medical Officer of Health:

R. BRUCE KILLOH, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.,
who is also Medical Officer of Health to Bradford and
Melksham Rural District.

Sanitary Inspector:

L. J. HILL, A.M.Inst.P.C., M.R.San.I., C.S.I.B.

Offices:

The office of the Medical Officer of Health is 1, King Street,
Melksham. Tel. Melksham 2307.

The office of the Sanitary Inspector is within the Town Hall,
Melksham. Tel. Melksham 3298.

GENERAL STATISTICS

Area of the District (Acres)	..	..	..	1,042
Estimated Population	..	..	..	6,711
Number of Inhabited Houses	..	..	..	2,000
Rateable Value	..	..	..	£44,763
Sum represented by a penny rate	..	..	..	£176

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS

The following statistics have been compiled from information received from the Registrar General :—

Births

Live Births

Births				Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	..	..	..	68	51	119
Illegitimate	..	..	..	1	4	5
Total number of live births				69	55	124

Birth Rate for the District (<i>i.e.</i> , per 1,000 population)	..	18.47
Comparative figure for England and Wales	..	15.5

Still Births

Births				Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	..	..	..	1	—	1
Illegitimate	..	..	..	—	—	—
Total number of still births				1	—	1

Still Birth Rate for the District	..	0.15
Comparative figure for England and Wales	..	0.36

Deaths

	Male	Female	Total
Number of Deaths in the Area	.. 43	45	88
Local Death Rate (<i>i.e.</i> , per 1,000 population)	..	..	13.11
Comparative figure for England and Wales	..	..	12.5

Infant Mortality

Deaths of Infants under 1 year

Deaths				Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	—	1	1
Illegitimate	—	1	1
Total number of deaths				—	2	2

Deaths of Infants under 4 weeks of age

Deaths				Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	—	—	—
Illegitimate	—	1	1
Total number of deaths				—	1	1

Infant Mortality Rate

Number of Deaths of Infants under 1 year of age per					
1,000 live births	..	..	..	..	16·12
Comparative figure for England and Wales	..		..	..	29·6

Causes of Deaths

The causes of death, classified according to the Registrar General's system, are given in the following table :—

	Male	Female	Total
Tuberculosis (respiratory)	—	1	1
(other)	—	—	—
Syphilitic disease	—	—	—
Diphtheria	—	—	—
Whooping Cough	—	—	—
Meningococcal infections	—	—	—
Acute Poliomyelitis	—	—	—
Measles	—	—	—
Other Infective and Parasitic disease ..	—	—	—
Malignant Neoplasm (stomach) ..	—	—	—
(lung bronchus) ..	—	—	—
(breast)	—	2	2
(uterus)	—	2	2
Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	5	8	13
Leukaemia, aleukaemia	—	—	—
Diabetes	1	1	2
Vascular lesions of nervous system ..	7	8	15
Coronary disease, Angina	5	4	9
Hypertension with heart disease ..	1	1	2
Other heart disease	8	9	17
Other circulatory disease	—	—	—
Influenza	2	—	2
Pneumonia	—	2	2
Bronchitis	2	1	3
Other diseases of the respiratory system ..	1	—	1
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum ..	—	—	—
Gastritis, Enteritis, and Diarrhoea ..	—	—	—
Nephritis and Nephrosis	2	—	2
Hyperplasia of prostate	2	—	2
Pregnancy, childbirth, abortion ..	—	—	—
Congenital malformations	—	1	1
Other defined and ill defined diseases ..	2	3	5
Motor vehicle accidents	3	—	3
All other accidents	1	1	2
Suicide	1	1	2
Homicide and Operations of War ..	—	—	—
TOTALS ..	43	45	88

OUTLINE OF THE HEALTH SERVICES OPERATING IN THE AREA

Laboratory Facilities

The Laboratory attached to the Pathology Department of Salisbury General Infirmary undertakes all bacteriological and pathological examinations in the district.

These laboratories with their skilled staff provide a most valuable service with regard to the examination of drinking water, food and milk samples, throat swabs, etc., and their willing co-operation and expert advice is greatly appreciated.

Hospital Facilities

The South-Western Regional Hospital Board is responsible for hospital facilities in this district.

The two hospitals in the area are a general hospital at Melksham, and a hospital for the chronic sick at Semington. Other general hospitals are situated in the neighbouring towns, with larger ones in Bath and Bristol.

Melksham Hospital with its very pleasant surroundings admits a wide variety of medical and surgical cases and is a most efficient and well-run unit of 42 beds. Melksham is indeed fortunate in having so excellent and so modern a hospital with such exceptional amenities at its disposal.

The nearest hospital for the treatment of common infectious disease is the Isolation Hospital at Trowbridge, while cases of Poliomyelitis are generally treated in Bath Isolation Hospital. The nearest Smallpox Hospital is at Bristol.

County Health Facilities

The following health services operating in the district are provided by the County Health Committee :—

Care of expectant and nursing mothers and young children.

Domiciliary Midwifery.

Health Visiting.

Home Nursing.

Arrangements for vaccination and immunization.

Ambulances and ambulance cars.

Domestic Helps.

Arrangements under Part III of the National Health Service

Act for the prevention of illness; care and after-care; and health education.

Mental Health Service.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Comparison with Previous Year

Disease	1950	1951
Scarlet Fever	7	2
Whooping Cough	5	36
Poliomyelitis—Paralytic ..	—	—
Non-paralytic ..	—	—
Measles	6	204
Diphtheria	—	—
Pneumonia	—	2
Dysentery	—	—
Erysipelas	1	1

Analysis under Age Groups

The distribution of cases according to age and sex are shown in the following tables.

Age Groups	Scarlet Fever		Whooping Cough		Acute Poliomyelitis		Measles	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 1 year	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	1
1-2 years	—	—	3	4	—	—	26	24
3-4 years	—	—	3	5	—	—	36	22
5-9 years	—	1	8	10	—	—	42	47
10-14 years	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
15-24 years	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
25 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Not known	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
TOTAL	—	2	16	20	—	—	106	98

Age Groups	Pneumonia		Dysentery		Erysipelas	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 5 years	—	—	—	—	—	—
5-14 years	1	—	—	—	—	—
15-44 years	—	—	—	—	—	1
45-64 years	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	1	—	—	—	—
Not Known	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	1	1	—	—	—	1

It is pleasing to report that no case of infectious disease necessitated removal from home to hospital.

A measles epidemic of some magnitude affected Melksham during the Spring but no serious complications were recorded.

Poliomyelitis

The District was fortunate in being free from any infection with Poliomyelitis throughout the season of incidence. There were likewise no cases reported during 1950.

Tuberculosis **NEW CASES**

Year				No. of cases	
1950	5
1951	13

Distribution of new cases according to age, sex, and localisation of disease, is as follows :—

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths	
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		M.	F.
	M.	F.	M.	F.		
Under 1 year	—	—	—	—	—	—
1-5 years	1	1	—	—	—	—
6-15 years	1	—	—	—	—	—
16-25 years	—	1	—	—	—	—
16-35 years	2	—	—	—	—	—
36-45 years	4	1	—	—	—	—
46-55 years	1	—	—	—	—	1
56-65 years	—	1	—	—	—	—
Over 65	—	—	—	—	—	—
Unknown	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	9	4	—	—	—	1

From the above table it will be seen that 13 cases of pulmonary tuberculosis were notified during 1951. One death from tuberculosis was recorded.

Housing of Tuberculosis Patients

During the year, cases were referred by the Chest Physician for consideration for re-housing. These cases are classified as follows :—

Certificate No. 1. Sputum-positive cases where re-housing is considered urgent for the prevention of infection.

Certificate No. 2. Where better housing would be desirable in order to improve and maintain the patient's health.

Certificate No. 3. Where improved housing would be beneficial but is not an urgent matter.

The following is a summary of the cases dealt with during the year :—

Type of Case	No. of cases referred	No. of cases re-housed
Certificate No. 1	3	2
Certificate No. 2	—	—
Certificate No. 3	—	—

Mass Radiography

During the Autumn the Mass Radiography Unit visited Melksham. The three largest factories were visited together with persons from local firms and the general public. A total of 2,594 persons attended for examination.

Active tuberculosis was discovered in fourteen persons, while forty-seven other non-tuberculous conditions were revealed.

From these figures it will be readily appreciated how vital a part this organisation plays in safeguarding the health of the community.

It is anticipated that a further visit of the Unit may be arranged when it is hoped an even greater number of the public will take advantage of this valuable service.

Diphtheria Immunization

Diphtheria immunization is carried out systematically throughout the district by General Practitioners and County Medical Officers, in homes and schools.

Diphtheria immunization was suspended for a time during the summer owing to the prevalence of Poliomyelitis in this and neighbouring districts.

Immunization Statistics, 1951

Number of primary immunizations completed during 1951 :—

Under 1 year	..	..	..	..	54
Up to 4 years of age	..	..	..	..	81
From 5-14 years of age	..	..	..	..	32
Number of reinforcing injections administered	..	..			290

Total immunized child population at 31st December, 1951 :—

Up to 4 years of age	..	..	..	..	345
From 4-14 years of age	..	..	..	..	948
			TOTAL	..	1,293

Vaccination

Number of persons vaccinated (or re-vaccinated) during 1951 :—

Age Group	Number Vaccinated	Number Re-vaccinated
Under 1 year	61	—
1-4 years	16	2
5-14 years	4	3
Over 15 years	14	44
TOTAL	95	49

Vaccination is performed under the National Health Service by General Practitioners. Emergency clinics can be operated in the event of an outbreak of smallpox in County Health Clinics at Salisbury and Swindon. Vaccination propaganda is undertaken by the County Health Authority.

It would appear that too few babies are being vaccinated at the present time, and in sharp contrast to diphtheria immunization, which is relatively popular, vaccination in infancy is in my experience inclined to be viewed with relative indifference at the present time. Everything possible, therefore, requires to be done towards stimulating public opinion in favour of vaccination and impressing on them the constant danger of smallpox outbreaks in a poorly protected community.

Food Poisoning

There were no outbreaks or known cases of food poisoning in the district during 1951.

National Assistance Act, 1948

SECTION 47: REMOVAL TO SUITABLE PREMISES OF PERSONS IN NEED OF CARE AND ATTENTION

During the year one case was kept under review, but I am happy to report that it was not found necessary to obtain compulsory removal of any persons against their will from their homes.

This step is one that should only be considered after all the assistance that can be given by Home Helps, District Nurses, National Assistance Officers and Welfare Officers, etc., has failed to provide the care and attention needed, and it is felt that there is need for more co-ordination of these services which are available to assist the aged and infirm.

REPORT

OF THE

SANITARY INSPECTOR

I have the honour to present my section of the Annual Report for the year 1951.

HOUSING

Number of houses inspected and recorded	..	..	12
Number of houses suitable for action under Section 11, Housing Act, 1936	..	..	2
Number of houses suitable for action under Section 9, Housing Act, 1936	..	..	Nil
Number of Demolition Orders issued	..	..	Nil
Number of Closing Orders issued	..	..	2

The gradual "weeding out" of the worst houses in the town went on in accordance with the Council's policy, and in the present circumstances, the process, must, of necessity, bear some relationship to the programme of new building.

It is manifestly impossible to attempt the wholesale removal of undesirable property and only in those cases where further repair was impossible was action taken under the Housing Act to secure the termination of the buildings existence.

In each case a full priced schedule of repairs is provided together with a valuation of the property, and the hearing by the Public Health Committee is conducted on lines similar to those of a court.

In one case above the Demolition Order which would have been issued was, by reason of the operation of the Housing Act, 1949, issued as a Closing Order, the house being scheduled as of historic importance under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT, 1936

Number of inspections	..	..	96
Number of informal notices served	..	..	19
Number of statutory notices served	..	..	Nil
Number of informal notices complied with	..	..	18

Operations under this act occur daily, and most frequently a personal call and request for action to remedy the conditions complained of is all that is necessary.

I am happy to say that no case arose during the year where there was any need to take action in the court.

In some cases under this act the official's work is strengthened by the operations of other acts, as for instance, in controlling the sites of caravans, considerable help can be obtained from the County Planning Department, and I have to record that such assistance has been received by me during the year.

MEAT AND FOODS

				Notices		
Number				Inspections	served	Completed
Bakehouses	..	..	4	11	1	1
Fish fryers	..	..	4	8	1	1
Butchers	..	..	8	10	2	2
Restaurants, Inns, etc.	..	..	51	34	—	—

There have been, throughout the year under review, the usual visits to condemn food, mainly canned items, and I attribute these requests from traders more to a desire to avoid losses of cash or credits than to any other factor. I feel that if the individual trader had to bear his own losses of canned foods, very large quantities would be destroyed every year without any reference to me.

BYELAWS UNDER SECTION 15, FOOD AND DRUGS ACT, 1938

Model byelaws under this section are in operation in the district, and their enforcement causes no very great concern. 67 visits have been made during the year and only in one instance was a verbal request for cleaner clothing necessary. The request was complied with within the forenoon.

I am satisfied that the requirements of the byelaws are being adequately met.

This work was closely allied to the clean food campaign and, in fact, from my point of view, was the campaign.

WATER SUPPLIES

The district continues to be served by the Trowbridge and Melksham and District Water Board with a supply of water which is of good quality.

On occasion during the year the adequacy of the supply left much to be desired especially in the higher places where pressure tends to be lower.

There is no plumbo solvency and no action was necessary during 1951 to deal with any contamination.

Samples were taken during the year to ensure the quality of the supply and below is given a typical result :—

Water sample received at 13.8.51.

1. BACTERIOLOGICAL COUNT.

Total colonies growing on agar at 37°C. in 48 hours : 2 per 1 ml. of water.

2. B. COLI COUNTS AT 37°C. in 48 hours and 44°C. in 48 hours.

Quantity of water tested	Acid and gas from lactose	
	At 37°C.	At 44°C.
Five tubes of 10 ml. water	—	—
Five tubes of 1 ml. water	—	—

As result of calculations made from above :—

(1) Number of Coli Aerogenes per 100 ml. growing
at 37°C. NIL

(2) Number of Faecal types of B. Coli per 100 ml. growing
at 44°C. NIL

OPINION. No evidence of pollution.

Date : 15th August, 1951.

The position at the end of the year was that some 54 houses with a population of approximately 200 were served by standpipe and the remainder of the town, some 1,760 houses with a population of 6,511, had internal water supplies.

SEWERAGE

The sewerage system of the town continued to function in a satisfactory manner. The only new works needed were those necessitated by the Council's house building operations.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

The work of modernising and enlarging the Disposal Works was continued during the year and apart from normal delays was satisfactory. At the end of the year it became apparent that the works would be in operation in 1952.

ICE CREAM

It has been my policy to try, where applicable, to persuade applicants for registration to sell prepacked material only, obtained from one of the larger reputable manufacturers.

I am of the view that this has been successful in that there are only 3 persons registered to manufacture ice cream in the town. I am not sure what the future of the one concern will be. In the past the maker has, with the expenditure of considerable sums on modern machinery and not a little ingenuity, managed to produce a reasonable article from poor buildings, but whether his widow will carry on I am not in a position to say.

There are now 23 retailers who have been visited 18 times in the year and 3 producers necessitating 7 visits.

MILK AND DAIRIES

				Number	Inspections	Notices served
Dairies	..	..	..	2	27	2
Distributors		..	..	4	7	—
Producers/Retailers		..	..	5	5	—
Tuberculin Tested Dealers Licences			..	..	..	2
Pasteurised Dealers Licences			..	..	..	2

A large amount of work was completed during the year at one dairy and some still remains to be done. Though it is now not my responsibility I am happy to say that most of the equipment of the buildings is of the latest pattern, from which uniformly good samples are maintained.

In only one instance was it necessary, during 1951, to carry out detailed investigation into a source of supply. The result was not available until 1952.

FACTORIES

Inspections

- (1) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are enforced by Local Authority (non-power)
- (2) Factories not included in (1) in which Section 7 is enforced by Local Authority (power)
- (3) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding outworkers' premises)

TOTAL

	Number on Register	Inspections	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(1)	21	17	1	—
(2)	20	8	—	—
(3)	8	4	—	—
	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	49	29	1	—
	—	—	—	—

	Found	Remedied	Referred to H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	1	1	—	—	—
Overcrowding (S.2)	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable Temperature (S.3)	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate Ventilation (S.4)	1	1	—	—	—
Drainage of Floors (S.6)	—	—	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)	—	—	—	—	—
(a) Insufficient	1	1	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or Defective	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	3	3	—	—	—
	—	—	—	—	—

Outwork

- Making wearing apparel 5

AVON POLLUTION

Following on the work of previous years regarding the possibility of swimming in the river, routine samples were taken and the Analyst's certificate indicated a degree of danger for swimmers.

With the re-organisation of work under this heading now well under way the River Board should, in future, deal with the matter.

FACTORIES

Inspections of factories, in close liaison with H.M. Inspector of Factories with whom I am pleased to report very cordial relations, were carried out during the year.

A very great deal of work was required, some of it a leave over from previous years, and principally at the two major factories. The results are that new sanitary accommodation for workmen and new accommodation and offices have been provided in the one, and new sanitary accommodation and redesigning of the offices in the other. This latter was necessary to provide a means of escape in case of fire for office staffs, and some of it is still proceeding in 1952.

On the subject of means of escape in case of fire I feel very strongly that the law on the subject, so far as it relates to offices generally, is inadequate, and badly in need of improvement. It is only by the exercise of a great deal of ingenuity and argument and much research that factory owners can be persuaded to provide these highly necessary facilities, and the work of getting a building licence thereafter is often a herculean task. I shall be glad to see on the Statute Book an act designed to overcome this difficulty.

The passing of the new Rag Flock and other Filling Materials Act did not affect the feather factory to any great extent.

RODENT CONTROL

This service was carried on during 1951 in accordance with the latest practice.

The operator left during the year and some time elapsed before another could be engaged. However, the essential requirements were met and at the end of the year most of the causes of complaint had been dealt with.

PETROLEUM STORAGE

26 licensed premises store a total of 119,350 gallons of petrol and 2 premises a total of 15 cwts. of carbide. No incidents occurred during the year requiring the attention of the Council.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this report I am glad to record a year of solid help and co-operation from the Chairman and all members of the Council both inside the Committee and Council Chambers and out.

I am also glad to be able to place on record my appreciation of a year of cordial harmony with Dr. Killoh, and of the help and support I have received at all times from my colleagues on the staff.

I have the honour to be,

Mr. Chairman, Miss Knee and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

L. J. HILL,

Sanitary Inspector.



